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ABSTRACT

This inservice program for principals was designed to assist the development and maintenance of effective Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), as mandated by Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The manual first introduces the concept of the principal as a facilitator, outlining the principal's role and responsibilities within a PAC. The second section deals with publicity and recruitment of PAC members, meeting the needs of individual PAC members, representation, communications, decision making, problem solving, and leadership. The third section discusses increasing the involvement of parents in school visitations and monitoring programs. The steps involved in planning and conducting needs assessments are outlined in the fourth section. The fifth section covers planning future Title I programs and PAC involvement in budgeting. (Author/APM)

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BUILDING PACs

A guide for Title I principals

Developed By

Janice Druian
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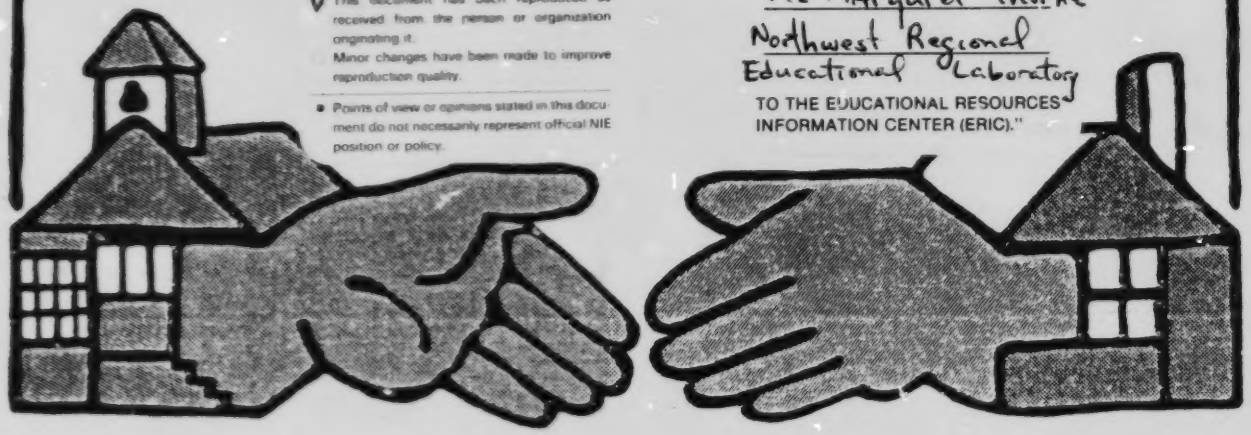

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BUILDING PACs

A Guide for Title 1 Principals

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Preface

During the fall of 1977, a team from Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, working with Title I administrators from Portland, Oregon, developed and implemented a Title I principals' Inservice Project. The purpose of this project was to provide an inservice program for principals focused on building and maintaining effective Parent Advisory Councils (PACs).

The inservice began with an overview of the role of principal as facilitator. Subsequently, the project covered activities and procedures for recruiting PAC members, nominating PAC officers, reviewing school programs and assessing student needs. Final sessions dealt with planning future Title I programs and budgets. The emphasis was on building community support through forming a partnership with Title I parents.

This handbook parallels the sequence presented in the workshops and contains many of the materials that were used. It can be used by principals who want some practical procedures for organizing and maintaining Parent Advisory Councils.

Although facilitating PAC development is a time-consuming job, one that is often added to an already busy schedule, we feel that it is important to the well-being of the school that it be given the necessary time and effort. As you work with the PAC, you are not only working to improve

the Title I program by gaining the support of parents, you are also strengthening the entire school by helping citizens discover how they can have an active role in educational decision making.

The following materials will help you identify things you can do to energize the PAC and help the PAC learn to use effective operating procedures. Also included are ideas for building citizen support for your school.

We have included many materials that are headed "To Use With PAC." These materials are designed so that you or a PAC chairperson can use them directly with the PAC. We intend the instructions on these materials only as guidelines for your work with your PAC and assume that you will modify many of the materials to meet your own specific school needs.

We have used a format which has wide margins in the hope that you will feel free to make your own notes in the blank spaces.

SECTION 1- Role of the Title 1 Principal - PAC Facilitator

We hear the word "facilitator" being used a lot these days. It has become a familiar word to those of us who wade through educational jargon. However, "facilitator" is an appropriate word to describe the Title I Principal's relationship with the Parent Advisory Council (PAC). The principal is responsible for seeing that PACs:

- are organized, receive orientation and nominate members,
- review the past year's Title I accomplishments and become familiar with this year's program,
- review the Title I needs assessment and make recommendations about future Title I programs, and
- review the Title I application for next year.

To accomplish these tasks is no easy job, especially when Title I responsibilities are only a segment of the responsibilities of the building principal. But by building parent support through the PAC, the principal can identify school needs and gain community support for needed changes in the school. Most principals recognize that community support of schools increases with community awareness of what the schools are trying to do.

INVOLVING CITIZENS

To put Title I PAC involvement into perspective, you might consider the following categories of citizen involvement adapted from "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," developed by Sherry Arnstein:[1]

Citizen Control
Delegated Power
Partnership
Involvement
Consultation
Informing
Manipulation

Manipulation: Manipulation is at the bottom of the ladder of citizen involvement. This is where citizens are involved to meet some mandated requirement for citizen involvement, but their role is that of "rubber stamp" for policies and decisions over which they have limited information and no control.

Informing: Informing citizens of their rights, responsibilities and options can be the first step toward actual citizen involvement. However, the emphasis is frequently placed on a one-way flow of information--from institutions to citizens--with no channel provided for feedback.

Consultation: Consultation goes one step beyond informing citizens, to inviting their opinions. The most frequent means of consultation are attitude surveys, needs assessments, neighborhood meetings and public hearings.

Involvement: In this level of involving citizens, the citizens serve on boards or committees and advise the public agency. The degree to which they

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[1] Arnstein, Sherry R., "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," American Institute of Planners' Journal, July 1969.

are effective depends upon (1) the amount of information they have, (2) their skill in presenting their ideas, (3) their ability to listen to others, and (4) the degree to which they represent the community.

Partnership: This is where public agencies and citizens' groups are involved in shared planning and decision-making responsibilities. There is give and take, and decisions reflect citizen input.

Delegated Power: This is when citizens have a dominant decision-making authority over a particular plan or program.

Citizen Control: This level of involvement occurs when citizens' groups have direct control of a project. They have full charge of policy and managerial aspects and are fully able to negotiate the conditions under which "outsiders" may change them.

We see Title I PAC involvement as ranging from "informing" to "partnership." To comply with the legal mandates, parents with children in the Title I program must be informed about their child's needs and about the way the school is going about meeting those needs. But the role of the PAC goes beyond simply getting accurate and full information about Title I. Because the PAC reviews the previous year and makes recommendations for the upcoming year, PAC members can be seen as consultants. A truly effective PAC will have citizens actively involved in the needs assessment and in building community support. If this occurs, the PAC participation level falls somewhere between the levels of involvement and partnership.

We think that it is useful for you to explore with PAC members their expectations about levels of involvement. Some members may have been on other citizens' groups before. Their previous experiences

will certainly influence their expectations about their role as PAC members. If both you and the PAC have the same level of expectations, many conflicts can be avoided.

It is also important to examine with PAC members the relationship between commitment on the part of members and the level of involvement. It takes more preparation and commitment to be a member of a partnership than it does to be a member of a group that is informed and consulted.

It also takes more work on the part of the principal to motivate and guide a partnership. We think that the payoffs make it worth the extra effort.

The following table compares the requirements established by the government with guidelines for forming an active citizen participation group:

TASKS AND GROUP BUILDING ACTIVITIES

	PAC REQUIREMENTS	PARTNERSHIP
Size	As many as you can get out	7-15 for decision-making groups
Membership	At least 51% be Title I parents	Membership that represents the school community, with 51% Title I parents
Number of sessions	Enough to complete these tasks: • Review past year's Title I accomplishments and become familiar with this year's program. • Organize the PAC and tell new members about PAC and Title I. • Review the needs assessment and make recommendations about future Title I programs. • Review the Title I application for next year.	Enough to complete these tasks: • Share expectations and agree on the purpose of the group. GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER. • Identify people who are not present who should be if the group is to be representative. • Plan ways to build membership. • Set goals. • Identify activities to meet goals. • Elect officers. • Decide how decisions will be made. • Set a calendar of events. • Build skills to complete tasks (i.e., reviewing budgets, participating in a needs assessment, monitoring school programs, etc.). • Carry out identified activities.

FOUR FUNCTIONS OF FACILITATION

To build and maintain a group capable of carrying out the Title I tasks in Table 1, you need to facilitate the partnership tasks, also listed in the table. To facilitate this the principal needs to be a

- Catalyst
- Solution Giver
- Resource Linker
- Process Helper

catalyst

Getting parents to visit the school can require a lot of energy. Frequently, announcements of meetings and letters home do not do the job. The principal, as catalyst, works with the few active parents to help them develop ways of eliciting participation from the less active parents.

solution giver

As principal you have a lot of information that is simply not available to the layperson. You can help parents identify solutions to problems identified in the Title I needs assessment.

resource linker

Your knowledge of school resources can be an invaluable aid to the PAC. You can help them identify ways to conduct a needs assessment (by using the resources in this guide and others that are available to school people), find ways to duplicate materials, or possibly get guest speakers for PAC meetings.

process helper

This may be your most important skill. If you can assist the PAC (possibly by working closely with the PAC chairperson) to conduct meetings that are friendly, productive and timely, you will be insuring active parent participation and support.

To do this you will need to help the PAC set up and use effective meeting procedures and help the PAC set norms where members (especially new members) feel included and involved.

SUMMARY

In this section we have tried to identify the parameters of PAC involvement by comparing it to the broad range of citizen involvement outlined by Arnstein's ladder. We also examined the role of the principal as facilitator of the PAC.

In the next four sections we will examine the following PAC tasks: recruiting and setting up the PAC; monitoring programs; needs assessment; reviewing programs. We will focus on practical procedures for accomplishing these tasks.

SECTION 2 - Getting Going

To get a PAC organized requires several tasks:

- Publicity/Recruiting Membership
- Orientation
- Establishing Council Membership
- Setting up and Maintaining an Effective Group

PUBLICITY/RECRUITMENT

How to get your PAC going depends on whether or not you have active PAC members from the previous year. If you have no previously active PAC members, the best way to begin is to set up an information session for parents--a session where Title I is explained and PAC council members are solicited from those parents who attend this information session. You might consider the following suggestions for ways to set up an information session:[2]

- Direct mailing to all parents in school attendance area
- Notice in local papers
- Notice sent through the PTA, neighborhood associations, newsletters, flyers, etc.
- Radio or TV
- Bilingual home/school consultants

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2 This list is from the Parent Advisory Councils in Oregon--Where Do You Fit In? This book is available for PACs in Oregon and we recommend it to all principals. You can order this book through ESEA, Title I, Oregon Department of Education, 942 Lancaster Drive, NE, Salem, Oregon. There are sample letters to parents on pages 57-66.

You can also "piggyback" PAC recruitment efforts with other school events:

- Information about Title I can be part of a PTA agenda
- A flyer about Title I can be distributed at sports events
- Open houses can have a special Title I display and demonstration session

However, principals who have had success report that nothing works like personal contact for getting people involved. If you have a few active Title I parents in your school, you could solicit their help in calling parents or visiting parents who do not have a phone. The following is a "script" that a parent can use when phoning:

TO USE WITH PAC

The PAC volunteer phone recruiter can use this script as a guide when calling parents.

When you phone, please introduce yourself immediately:

"This is _____. I am calling to let you know about _____School's Title I Program. I would like to invite you to a meeting to discuss the present Title I program. The meeting will be at _____o'clock, _____night. We will be talking about Title I, the special programs in our school and how parents can be involved to make it even a better program. Do you think you will be able to make this meeting? Will you need transportation?

_____(child's name)_____ will be bringing home a notice about this meeting. I will be looking forward to meeting you."

Thank the parent for his/her time and leave the school's telephone number in the event there are any additional questions about the meeting.

telephone tree

Another method of recruitment is a telephone tree. One parent phones two people and requests that they phone two more. If you use this method, it is important that each person who is called repeats the time and place of the meeting. It is also important to send home a back-up flyer to be sure that correct information is sent to each parent.

potlucks

Many Title I principals report that they have greatest success with meal time meetings and with meetings that involve the parents' children in a demonstration or school event. This is only natural. People are more likely to attend a meeting that has promise of being a comfortable social event. A pot-luck or a supper can provide people with a chance to get to know one another in an informal environment.

It is also to be expected that a parent is more likely to attend a meeting where his or her child has a role. If Title I children explain the program and show parents how the program promotes their education, the children will also benefit from the experience.

The following agenda for an orientation meeting can serve as a guide for your first meeting:

TO USE WITH PAC

This is a sample and can be used for discussion.

HILL CREST TITLE I PAC ORIENTATION

MEETING AGENDA

Time		Materials
7:00	**Introductions**	
	Principal introduces Title I teachers and aides	Name tags
	Principal asks participants to introduce themselves to the person next to them and share how they heard about the meeting and what they would like to see happen to their children as a result of the Title I program	
	Principal asks for volunteers to share some of the hopes for Title I (If there are no volunteers, principal and staff can share their expectations)	
7:15	**Sharing the Agenda**	
	Principal (or former PAC chairperson or staff member) shares agenda for the evening and shares expectations (parent commitment and active role on PAC); question and answer period	Agenda on butcher paper or overhead
7:25	**Orientation to Title I**	
	Principal or staff person shares history of Title I and how Title I benefits children: What Is Title I?* How Are Students Selected?	Information on overheads or butcher paper or in booklet

* For an example of one school's summary statement about each of these questions, see page 144, Parent Advisory Councils in Oregon.

Agenda (continued)

What Are the Title I Programs?
How Many Children Are Served by the Program?
How Are Programs Evaluated?
Are Title I Funds Supplementary?
How is the Classroom Teacher Involved in the Title I Program?
What Are the Goals of the Program?
How Are Parents Involved? (If you have former PAC members, this is an ideal time for them to share their experiences and perceptions)

Questions and Answers:

Ask parents to get into groups of three or four people and come up with a list of questions. Have groups share questions.

Principal, staff and former PAC people answer questions.

8:00 Parent Pledge

Using form (see next page), have parents identify what responsibilities they can take on. Collect forms. — Parent Pledge

3:15 Remind Parents

The next meeting will include selection of officers. Share time and date.

Ask parents to try to bring another Title I parent with them next time.

Pass out evaluation form; explain that you want their honest feedback so that meetings can be both interesting and productive. (If there is a former PAC chairperson or member, these last three activities can be handled by this person.) — Evaluation Form

TO USE WITH PAC

PARENT PLEDGE

In order to help my child and other youngsters in our Title I program, I pledge to help with the following: (Please check one or more)

	Check
Serve on our school's Parent Advisory Council	_____
Spend a morning visiting a Title I classroom	_____
Attend Title I open houses and teacher conferences	_____
Give other parents rides to PAC meetings	_____
Babysit for parents who attend PAC meetings	_____
Telephone or contact other parents about the next meeting	_____
Other (please describe)	_____

The best time to phone me is _____

The best time to visit my home is _____

Name_____

Address_____

Telephone_____

TO USE WITH PAC

MEETING EVALUATION FORM

We like to get information at the end of the meeting that will help us plan for the next meeting.

Please check one:

This meeting was useful. ___ yes ___ no

This meeting was confusing. ___ yes ___ no

Please let us know how we can make the meetings better (Is the time OK? The room comfortable, etc.?)

Suggestions:

COMPOSITION OF TITLE I PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS AND PAC SELECTION PROCESSES

The majority (at least 51%) of the Parent Advisory Council must be Title I parents. A PAC can have the following composition:[3]

Voting Members

- Parents of Title I children attending the eligible school (must comprise at least 51% of the total membership).
- Parents of non-Title I children attending eligible school.
- Parents of children attending non-public schools served by Title I that reside in the local public school attendance area
- Any resident of the school attendance area, i.e., senior citizens, agency representatives, business people and other interested citizens

Non-Voting Members:

- Anyone, regardless of residence, with interest in the school or who has resource capabilities may be invited by the PAC to serve as a non-voting member, i.e., business people and school staff.
- Full or part-time employees of the school district shall not be eligible for voting membership or office on any Title I PAC.
- Persons under eighteen years of age

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[3] From: "Local School Selection Process for Title I Parent Advisory Councils," developed by School District #1, Portland, Oregon.

District #1, Portland, Oregon has identified four alternative selection processes. We think these allow enough flexibility to meet the needs of different schools. The four alternative methods are:

1. Selection at Open Meeting
2. Open Meeting Election
3. Election by Mailed Ballots
4. Balloting at the School Building

Selection at Open Meeting. Selection of council members can take place at an open meeting by using one or more of the following methods. The methods can be decided by those attending the meeting:

- Nominating committee
- Nominations from the floor
- Selection by consensus (see "Decisions by Consensus," later in this section)
- Volunteer service
- Election by ballot
- Nomination by ballot

Open Meeting Election. Prior to the open meeting the existing PAC can appoint a monimating committee. The committee should have at least three and not more than seven members. At least one member should represent Title I parents and one member should represent non-Title I parents.

The nominating committee can select at least one nominee for each position to be filled. Consent of the nominee must be achieved prior to placement of the name on the ballot.

The nominating committee will be responsible for preparing the ballots and having them printed with blank spaces for write-in votes.

Nominations from the floor are in order providing the nominee(s) meets the qualifications for that position. Balloting will take place during the open meeting.

Election by Mailed Ballots. Prior to the open meeting the existing PAC can appoint a nominating committee (three to seven members) with representatives from both Title I and non-Title I parents.

The committee selects at least one nominee for each position to be filled. Consent of the nominee must be given prior to placement of the name on the ballot.

In this procedure, the nominating committee is responsible for writing the ballots and having them printed with blank spaces for write-in votes.

The school PAC is responsible for mailing the ballots to parents of all children attending the school. In addition, the ballot must be made available to all attendance area residents who wish to vote by a method decided upon by the PAC Balloting at School Building. If your school decides to use this method, you can follow the same procedures on the previous option with the exception that the balloting is held at the school building for all residents of the community.

Before deciding on any one selection process, you may want to list advantages and disadvantages of each method with your PAC. During one of the workshops conducted with the Portland Principals we generated a list of advantages and disadvantages for each method. The following page contains a summary of that list.

COUNCIL MEMBER SELECTION PROCESS	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
1. Selection at Open Meeting	• Broad group from which to select • Those attending show interest • Easiest to do • Reduces clerical work	• Hard to insure over 51% Title I parents • Difficult to get representative group • Attendance at meeting might be off
2. Open Meeting Election	• Pre-selection of candidates insures that the interested ones will be on ballot	• Over-nomination of non-target parents • Majority may not know nominees
3. Election by Mailed Ballots	• Those who vote are interested • Can reach maximum number of people • Documented involvement	• Expensive • Low response is typical • Recipients not familiar with nominees • Lacks personal contact
4. Balloting in the School Building	• Easy to do • Low cost • Opportunity to also have parents visit school	• Difficult to get people out • Limited personal contact • Inconvenient to come to school building

These lists are by no means exhaustive. If you use these as a starter for discussion with your PAC, you will probably be able to come up with more advantages and disadvantages for each method. By involving PAC members in this activity, you will also be building commitment for whichever method is chosen.

MEETING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Earlier in this section we mentioned that it is difficult to start from scratch and build a PAC. For that reason it is especially important to identify not only what gets people to make an initial visit to a PAC meeting, but also what keeps them coming back.

People become involved in anything because the activity meets one or more personal needs. Social scientists have identified three individual needs that must be met if a group is to keep its membership and continue to work productively. These are an individual's needs for:

- Inclusion
- Control
- Affiliation

inclusion

Think back to the last conference you attended. When you walked into the first session, did you look for familiar faces? Did you feel a little uncomfortable until you had been introduced to strangers or had introduced yourself? It is a common human need to have to feel included in a group situation. You as principal, working with the PAC chairperson, can identify ways to make people feel included. Some ways that were identified by the Portland principals include:

- Having a person designated as "greeter" who would greet new parents and bring them up to date

- Having name tags
- Having a sharing session at each meeting where parents can tell a little about their children, what they are doing in the Title I program
- Having a warm-up activity where parents introduce themselves to the person next to them, and then, in turn, introduce that person to the group
- Having a telephone relay--some parents are responsible for phoning other Title I parents prior to a meeting to invite them to the meeting

control

Another common need of people in groups is the need to feel that they can influence the group--the need for control. Do you remember the last time someone informed you of some new regulation or requirement that you had to carry out? If you had not been a party to determining that this was a necessary requirement, how did you feel? If you are like most of us, you probably felt frustrated. People do not like to feel manipulated or affected by decisions over which they have no control. A strong and viable PAC is one in which members feel that their contributions have influence. The following list contains suggestions for areas where the PAC should have a high degree of decision-making power:

- Determining how the PAC budget will be allocated and monitored
- Determining the role the PAC will have in the Title I needs assessment
- Determining the time, place and agenda for PAC meetings
- Identifying recruitment procedures
- Identifying skill training needs (example: decision-making procedures)

affiliation

The third individual need is that of affiliation. People join clubs so that they can say, "I'm an Elk ... a Mason...a PTA member," etc. Belonging is important. This is one reason to consider the social aspect of PAC meetings. The following items that help build a group were suggested by various members in the Portland Inservice Program:

- Pot-lucks
- Meetings with student presentations
- Viewing a film and discussing it in small groups
- Parent needs identification--which parents need babysitting, who would like to pair up for a visit to the school, etc.

If you and your PAC chairperson try to identify ways that the meetings can help people feel included and influential in a pleasant and supportive atmosphere, the likelihood for active participation goes up.

MORE THAN JUST A REQUIREMENT--BUILDING A REPRESENTATIVE GROUP

Citizen involvement is mandated by Title I, but most principals that we have talked to have indicated that they want to have active citizen groups in order to build better communication and support from the school community.

To build a citizen advisory group that can give valuable input to the school requires help from staff, currently involved citizens and the principal. Below is a procedure that you might use or modify in order to build a group that is representative of the school and community.

TO USE WITH PAC

FORMING A REPRESENTATIVE GROUP

Purpose: To help PAC members (or other involved parents/citizens) identify who lives in the community, to identify opinion leaders in the community and to take steps to form a representative school-community advisory group.

Procedure: Have individuals or small groups fill out Form #1 "School Community Profile."

Working as a total group, fill out Form #2, "Representatives and Opinion Groups."

Once you have identified the people who need to be on the representative School-Community Group, have your group fill out the third form, "Who Can Help." This is a planning work sheet for identifying the representatives, the groups they represent, how to contact representatives and the materials (orientation and awareness materials) and skills (example: decision-making skills) that the representatives will need to work effectively in the School-Community Group.

TO USE WITH PAC-- Form #1

SCHOOL COMMUNITY PROFILE

DIRECTIONS: Stop to reflect on the composition of your community. The worksheet is organized according to several categories to help you reflect on your school-community and to develop a community profile.

1. Using former data you've collected, intuition and your best guesses, estimate the percentage of the population in the following categories:

AGE CLUSTERS

Under 18	_____
18 - 25	_____
26 - 35	_____
36 - 50	_____
51 - 65	_____
over 65	_____

SEX

Male	_____
Female	_____

MARITAL STATUS

(Rank order according to size of group, 1 = most populated group; 7 = least populated group)

With Children	single	_____
	married	_____
	separated/divorced	_____
	married (children over 18)	_____
Without Children	single	_____
	married	_____
	separated/divorced	_____

Form #1 (continued)

HOUSING (use %)

Individually owned homes	____
Rented homes	____
Apartments	____
Subsidized housing	____

Are there any natural boundaries (freeways, apartment clusters, etc.) within your district? What are they?

EDUCATION

Less than high school	____
High school graduate	____
Some college	____
College graduate	____
Advanced degree	____

POLITICAL PREFERENCE

Liberal	____
Conservative	____
Moderate	____

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

List major religious groups in this community.

RACIAL MIX

Anglo	____
Black	____
Native American	____
Chicano	____
Other	____

ADDITIONAL INFLUENCE GROUPS

List lodges, major employers, citizens or neighborhood groups in your community.

TO USE WITH PAC --Form #2

REPRESENTATIVES AND OPINION GROUPS

Based on the community profile, identify those persons you would need to have in a representative problem-solving group. List the major opinion groups (example: single parent families, Russian ethnic group, employees of GAF, etc.) on the left of the sheet and the number of persons that you would need from that group to form a representative group. (Example: if your district has a very large Chicano population and a medium size Anglo Baptist group, you may need two Chicano representatives and only one Anglo Baptist.) Also list possible representatives of the group if you know them.

Opinion Groups	No. of Reps.	Possible Representatives

TO USE WITH PAC--Form #3

WHO CAN HELP

Directions:

Now that you have (1) developed a community profile and (2) identified significant opinion groups, you will need to consider who can help you reach these people to invite them to join the citizen's group. This list may include teachers, aides, counselors, students, currently active (in PAC) citizens, Title I district staff, parents with whom you have contact.

WHO	TARGET GROUP	HOW CONTACT GROUPS/PEOPLE	MATERIALS/SKILLS NEEDED

These forms are not only for principals who wish to help form representative groups. They can also be used with members of an ongoing school-community group or PAC. Members can use them to determine if the group has representation of all groups and people concerned.

HOW EFFECTIVE GROUPS WORK

The processes and the procedures that a group uses will often determine how the group accomplishes its tasks. We are going to examine four important aspects of group functioning:

- Communication
- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Leadership functions

Communication

The ways that members in a group communicate with one another can determine how members feel about their participation. If members interrupt one another, or misconstrue statements, or label each other, there are bound to be problems. Do you use the time another person is speaking as time for you to prepare what you are about to say? Or do you listen actively to what others are saying to be sure you understand? When you are tired and exhausted, do you tell the other members of the group? When members of a group are restless, do you ask them if it is about time for a break? All of the above examples deal with communication or the lack of communication. The following material can be used as a handout with the PAC or simply as a review for you of the ways that communication can be enhanced. By using these skills you can model communication that helps groups work effectively.

communica-
tion

TO USE WITH PAC -- This can be used as a discussion paper

REVIEW OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Four skills have been identified that, if used consistently and correctly, can aid people in communicating with one another. These are: paraphrasing, perception checking, behavior description, and describing one's own feelings.

PARAPHRASING

The situation: How do you check to make sure that you understand another person's ideas, information or suggestions as he/she intended them? How do you know that his/her remark means the same to you as it does to him/her?

The skill: If you state in your own way what his/her remark conveys to you, the other can begin to determine whether his/her message is coming through as intended. Then if the speaker thinks you misunderstand, he/she can speak directly to the specific misunderstanding you have revealed.

Example: Sarah: Jim should never have become a teacher.
Bob: You mean teaching isn't the right job for him?
Sarah: Exactly! Teaching is not the right job for Jim.

PERCEPTION CHECK

The situation: How do you know how another person is really feeling? You can mentally translate behaviors into your assessment of the other's feelings, but unless you check with the other person, you may be guessing incorrectly.

The skill: You describe what you perceived to be the other's inner state in order to check whether you do understand what he/she feels. That is, you test to see whether you have decoded the other's expressions of feeling accurately.

Example: "I get the impression you are angry with me. Are you?"
(Not: "Why are you so angry with me?" This is mind reading, not perception checking.)

BEHAVIOR DESCRIPTION

The situation: If you and another person are to discuss the way you work together or what is happening in your relationship, both of you must be able to talk about what each of you does that affects the other. This is not easy. Most of us have trouble describing another's behavior; we usually discuss his/her attitudes, his/her motives or his/her traits and personality characteristics.

The skill: Behavior description means reporting specific, observable actions of others without (1) placing a value on them as right or wrong, bad or good, (2) making accusations or generalizations about the other's motives, attitudes or personality traits.

Example: "Bill, you've talked more than the others on this topic. Several times you have cut me and others off before we had finished."

Not: "Jim, you are always so rude! You just want to hog the floor!"

DESCRIPTION OF FEELINGS

The situation: If you wish others to respond to you as a person, you must help them understand how you feel.

The skill: Although we usually try to describe our ideas clearly and accurately, we often do not try to describe our feelings clearly. Feelings get expressed in many different ways, but we do not usually attempt to identify the feeling itself.

Examples:

One way to describe a feeling is to identify or name it. "I feel angry." "I feel comfortable." Another way is to express feelings in terms of similes. "I feel like a distance runner at the end of a race." A third way is to describe the feeling in terms of a wished for action. "I feel like I would like to hug you."

Decision Making

Decision making is one of the most important processes that groups undertake. The methods used to make decisions can tell a lot about a group. Think back over a group meeting you have attended. How many times were decisions made simply because there was a lack of response? Do you remember times when a group member proposed an idea and was interrupted by another member? Have there been times when there was no response to an idea or proposal? What about times when the convener has said, "Well, it looks like we want to do such and such," before really determining the wishes of the entire group? All of these incidents are ways of making decisions. When a proposal is made and either interrupted or not discussed, it is a way of saying that this proposal is defeated. When a group leader makes decisions without formally getting group support, it is a form of authority rule or one-person decision making.

decision making

Consider the following ways that decisions are made:

1. Decisions by Lack of Response ("Plop"): This is the most common way that decisions are made. It occurs so often and quickly that it is often hard to see. Someone suggests an idea, and before anyone else has said anything about it, someone else suggests another idea until the troop finds one it will act on. All the ideas which have been bypassed have in a sense been decided upon by the group.

This kind of decision making can lead to frustration and be very demoralizing for the people who made the suggestions. "Well, if my ideas aren't good enough for this group, I'll just shut up."

2. Decisions by Authority Rule: Many groups set up a system where there is open discussion of ideas, but the chairman or president of the group can say after holding a free discussion that he/she has decided what to do.

This kind of decision making is very efficient. However, if the group does not support the decision made by the authority, it may not work to carry out the decision. "If he thinks it's such a good idea, let him carry it out."

3. Decisions by a Minority: This is when a few people hold the decision-making power, or when a motion passes with only support by a small faction of the group. This kind of decision making has the same difficulty as authority rule--the silent majority can get angry and either sabotage the decision or drop out of the group. "Silence means consent, doesn't it? Everyone had a chance to voice opposition."

Decisions by "Hand Clasp": This is another form of minority rule--one or more members actively support a course of action; on the basis of this support, the course of action is chosen. Sometimes this has been called "railroading."

4. Decisions by Majority Support: (Voting/ Polling) This is a familiar decision-making process. One simple way is to poll everyone's opinion following some discussion, and if some majority feels that same way, to assume that is a decision. The other method is the more formal one of stating a clear alternative and asking for votes in favor of it and votes against it, and abstentions.

On the surface, this method seems completely sound, but surprisingly often decisions made by this approach are difficult to carry out. The minority that lost can form a splinter group and either not support the decision of the majority or actively work against it. "We'll just form another group."

5. Decisions by Consensus: One of the most effective but also most time-consuming methods of group decision making is to seek consensus. Consensus is a state of affairs whereby a survey is taken to assess everyone's preference. A proposal is made and everyone is again surveyed to see if this is something they can support--not necessarily the first choice of any one participant, but something that can be supported by every member. No decision is made until every member of the group has stated that he/she can "live" with the decision and will not work against the decision. (Actual procedures will be on a separate page.)

The weakness of this decision-making procedure is that it often takes a lot of time. The strength is that when a decision is made, it is one that the total group can support.

6. Decisions by Unanimous Consent: This is the logically perfect but least attainable kind of decision. This is when everyone truly agrees on the course of action to be taken.

No one decision-making process is completely good or completely bad. It is important for a group to determine how it wants to make decisions, which kinds of issues need which kinds of decisions and how to monitor the decision-making process. It is also important in a PAC to identify those issues which must be decided upon by authorities from the school and which issues need to be decided by the PAC. One way to do this is to brainstorm the kinds of things that need decisions (curriculum changes, budget, PAC group procedures, etc.) and list the kinds of ways that decisions will be made around these issues.

It is currently popular to make decisions by "consensus." There are some very good reasons for consensus decision making--group support, a decision that will be carried out with enthusiasm by all members, etc. However, many decisions that are supposedly made by consensus are in fact decisions by majority rule and minority acquiescence. How often do you see a group leader look around a group, where a few heads are nodding affirmatively, and say, " Well, it looks like we are in consensus."? If the leader were to systematically poll the entire group, it is very likely that not everyone could support the decision. It is important if you choose consensus decision making as the appropriate method for your group that you have an agreed upon procedure for determining consensus. The following is one method:

TO USE WITH PAC

This can be reviewed with the PAC and if appropriate, set up as the procedure for making decisions.

PROCEDURES FOR DECISION BY CONSENSUS

1. A person states the decision that is proposed.
2. Someone offers a paraphrase of the decision, that is, puts the decision in his or her own words.
3. The person proposing the decision judges the accuracy of the paraphrase. If it is inaccurate, repeat the process.
4. If the paraphrase is accurate, the person proposing the decision or the chairperson asks each group member, in turn, to state whether or not he or she can support the decision, and if not, to state an alternative, if he or she wishes.
5. If all persons agree to support the decision, consensus exists and the decision is made.
6. If one or more persons do not agree to support the decision, but offer alternatives, test each alternative by asking each group member whether or not he or she can support it. At this point, the decision is made official either by voting or by having group members make some visible sign, such as raising their thumbs, that they support the decision and accept the conditions of consensus.
7. If consensus cannot be reached on existing alternatives, ask if there are other alternatives that anyone can suggest.
8. If no alternative can be found upon which consensus can be reached, try to locate reasons (for example, lack of information, inappropriate time to make the decision, etc.) why persons are unwilling to reach consensus.
9. If consensus is not reached, set a new time to attempt to make the decision.

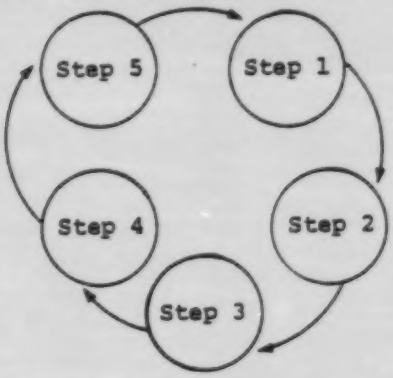
CONDITIONS OF CONSENSUS

- Everyone agrees to support the decision, though it may not be everyone's first choice.
- Everyone agrees that he or she has had sufficient opportunity to influence the decision.
- Everyone can state what the decision is.

Problem Solving

The way a group solves problems is also important. Have you been a member of a group that spent most of its time spinning its wheels? You might want to consider introducing the following systematic problem-solving procedure to the PAC.

We have identified a problem-solving model that has five phases:



Step 1: Define the Problem
Step 2: Search for Ways to Solve the Problem
Step 3: Make Plans
Step 4: Carry Out Plans
Step 5: Assess Results

Using the need to recruit membership for the PAC as an example, here is how the PAC might go about systematically solving this problem:

problem solving

Step 1 - The PAC has dwindled to three members over the course of the summer. It is determined that the membership needs a boost very badly. The three remaining members can develop a goal statement: We want our PAC to have a membership of at least ten Title I parents with at least seven at every meeting. The first step of the problem-solving process is completed when the group has identified a problem and has a goal statement.

Step 2 - The group proceeds to search for ways to boost attendance. These might include: providing transportation, arranging for babysitting, potluck meetings, publicity

over the radio, etc. To identify alternatives, the group might brainstorm ideas and then identify strengths and weaknesses of each proposed solution. Example: babysitting might be a good idea, but not possible because of the limited PAC budget. After the group has assessed strengths and weaknesses, it can then prioritize the list of alternatives and pick the top one or two approaches. In this case the group may choose to have both a potluck and plan some radio publicity. This step is over when the group chooses one or more alternatives.

Step 3 - If the PAC has chosen to have a potluck meeting and arrange for radio publicity, they will need to make plans for both these activities. This is the Who, What, and When. Who will coordinate the potluck, What will be on the menu and the agenda and When does all of this need to take place? Who will arrange for radio coverage, What will be announced (script) and When will it be announced? At this time it is also important to determine how the PAC will evaluate success. Will having an attendance increase of 50% be a success? 80%? Or will the PAC determine success by not only attendance, but how many people volunteer to help Title I?

Step 4 - This is the step where the plans for the radio announcements are made and carried out and the potluck is given.

Step 5 - The PAC will need to get together again to determine the success of the two chosen alternatives. Had participants heard the announcement on the radio? Did people not only attend the potluck, but express an

interest in being involved with Title I? Here too, the PAC can evaluate its effectiveness at making plans and carrying them out. Did those people who made commitments to either plan the radio announcements or prepare for the potluck live up to their agreements? Does everyone feel that the work was worth the effort? How can the group work more effectively together?

Problem solving is a cyclical process. After one problem is solved, the problem-solving group may go on to identify additional problems. It is by constant monitoring of a group's effectiveness that groups thrive.

Leadership Functions

Leaders are generally considered to be those persons who work well with the members of the group. The function of the leader is to help members gain skills and have meaningful involvement. The following are components of leadership. You might use this as a discussion list when working with the PAC convener.

leader-
ship

Provide Leadership. People come to groups with certain expectations. One expectation is that someone will be in charge and will start things off. Therefore it is important for the leader to clarify with the group the goals and purpose of the meeting.

Identify Successes. It is not bragging to comment occasionally on the successes the group is experiencing. Building morale is important for group functioning.

Share Leadership with Others. One sign of a leader is his or her ability to share leadership. If the leader supports different members in assuming responsibility for tasks, the group members will also assume more ownership.

Support Total Participation. Different people like to participate in different ways. The person who enjoys greeting people and helping people feel included may not be a person who enjoys convening an entire meeting. If the role of greeter is accorded the same amount of legitimacy (or prestige) as the role of convener, then people will have the opportunity to do what they enjoy doing. The Trail Blazers win because they are a team!

Leadership is a shared function. Each member of the PAC can have a leadership role. The following handout describes specific roles that PAC members may want to assume.

TO USE WITH PAC

This material can be used for discussion with PAC members.

LEADERSHIP ROLES

The Convener

The convener makes arrangements for the meeting, presents the agenda and conducts the meeting. This person keeps the group on task and encourages participation.

It is difficult to be both the convener and a major participant in discussions. As convener, you need to focus much of your attention on group process. If you have a lot of ideas you want to present, questions to ask or issues to raise, you may wish to ask someone else to temporarily act as convener.

Participants in meetings should feel that the time they spent was worthwhile. Although no one can guarantee that every meeting will be regarded as meaningful, the convener can take some steps to address people's concerns. This is done by assuming certain responsibilities before, during and after a meeting.

Secretary/Recorder

The group's recorder keeps track of what topics are covered and particularly what decisions are made.

The recorder should keep the following information:

- The name of the group
- Meeting place, date, time
- Participants, convener
- The proposed agenda
- The decisions made and agreements for follow-up activities
- A summary of the evaluation of the meeting

Process Observer

The role of the process observer is to watch and report the way the group operates.

The observer does not participate in the discussion. He or she sits apart from the group in order to gain a more objective view of what is happening within the group. When a discussion becomes hopelessly

bogged down or whenever the group members want to make use of the observer, he or she may be called on to give feedback on what has taken place. At the end of the meeting, the observer shares his or her perceptions of the group's process and behaviors with its members.

Process observers look for the following things:

- Does the group keep to the agenda?
- Does the group start on time? End on time?
- Is there balanced participation?
- What is the emotional atmosphere?
- Is the group dependent on one or two people?
- Do members help others communicate by paraphrasing or summarizing?
- Do members build on others' contributions?
- Do people actively listen and ask for clarification if needed?
- Do members summarize and check for understanding?
- Are points backed up with data and reasons?
- Are decisions made? How?
- Does everyone have a chance to get in on decision making?

The observer should be prepared to give feedback in terms of behavior descriptions--"Three members were late to the meeting"--not in evaluative terms--"Bill and Tom are never on time because they are disorganized."

Because the observer does not enter into the discussion, rotate this role from meeting to meeting or ask a person outside the group to assume this role.

Summary. For most people reading this paper, meetings are probably a common everyday occurrence. To keep meetings interesting, on target and to build a base for productivity, pay attention to pre-planning the meeting, using an agenda and clarifying roles.

Once roles are identified, you may want to work with the convener, the recorder or the process observer to help them establish procedures for carrying out their roles. The following hand-outs can serve as models or guides for these roles.

TO USE WITH PAC -- This can be used as a discussion paper.

HOW TO CONDUCT SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS

"Meetings! I hate 'em."

"Nothing ever gets done."

"Everybody sits around and argues."

"I wouldn't mind the meeting so much if the same people didn't always do all the talking."

If these comments sound familiar, the suggestions listed below may be helpful to you to bring your meetings out of the doldrums.

The three keys to a successful meeting include (1) pre-planning, (2) using an agenda and (3) clear roles of the people in the meeting.

1. Pre-plan the meeting. One of the most important ingredients of a good meeting is that people mutually understand the purpose of the meeting. Meetings will generally fall into one of these five categories:

    - information sharing
    - decision making
    - problem solving
    - skill building
    - bull/social session

Many complaints about meetings can be prevented if people know what they're coming to do. If early in the meeting someone states the purpose, it can help others see the direction and goal of the meeting.

2. Use an agenda. An agenda is an effective tool for identifying issues to be covered in a meeting, checking progress throughout the meeting, keeping a record of what was done and insuring followup on each item discussed. Better meetings can be planned if people who wish to be on the agenda complete a form that identifies the topic they want to talk about. Below is a sample form.

SAMPLE AGENDA--BUILDING FORM

Meeting of:_____
Meeting date:_____ Convener:_____
Submitted by:_____

1. Brief description of the item:

2. Action required (check ones that apply):

_____to inform _____to vent _____to build skill

_____to decide _____to discuss _____other:

Sample Agenda--Building Form (continued)

3. Materials to bring to the meeting:

4. Presenter:

5. Who else should be present:

6. Time required:

7. Any other information:

If each participant submits an agenda item on this form, the convener can use these forms to build the meeting agenda. A sample agenda appears below.

SAMPLE AGENDA

Group Meeting:_____

Date:_____ Convener:_____

Item	Presenter	Action Item	Followup

TO USE WITH PAC

This check list can be used by the convener and the process observer.

	Arrangement Complete (✓)
I. BEFORE THE MEETING	
A. Arrange for adequate facilities	___
B. Prepare a tentative agenda	___
C. Circulate the agenda in advance	___
II. DURING THE MEETING	
A. At the beginning of the meeting	
1. Call the meeting to order at the designated time	___
2. Be certain that there is a recorder	___
3. Be certain there is a process observer	___
4. State the purpose of the meeting	___
B. During the meeting	
1. Keep the group focused on its purpose and tasks	___
2. Monitor the discussion so that everyone has a chance to speak	___
3. Clarify and summarize when appropriate	___
4. Assist the group in using agreed upon procedures	___
5. Bring out all sides of an issue	___
6. Move the group toward decisions	___
7. Use knowledge and skills of group process and communication	___
C. At the end of the meeting	
1. Make sure assignments and agreements are clear	___
2. Announce the date, time and place of the next meeting	___
3. Identify the purpose of the next meeting and any items that will be on that agenda	___
4. Hear the report from the process observer	___
5. Evaluate the meeting	___
III. AFTER THE MEETING	
A. Check with the recorder to be sure that the minutes are clear	___
B. Help others carry out the decisions made	___

BUILDING A TITLE I CALENDAR

Another task for getting started is building the Title I Calendar. Each school will need to create a unique calendar to meet specific needs. The two calendars on the next two pages are from the Parent Advisory Councils in Oregon, Where Do You Fit?

The items are listed according to school events and PAC events. You will need to work with the PAC in your own school to set up definite dates. You may also find that you need to work with the district administration to come to agreement on dates for the school events.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR EVENTS FOR PARTNERS IN A TITLE I PROGRAM[4]

	Role of the School
August	Carry out staff training
September	Begin project. Select students and inform parents. Help PAC get started.
October	Test students. Plan students' programs. Tell regular staff about project plans. Give information and resources to PAC. (Specific plans and how-to suggestions come later.)
November	Orientation/training programs are conducted for the PAC. Judge how well students are doing in current project.
December	Plan activities, using parents, senior citizens, and other community members as resources.
January	Select eligible school(s) for next year.
February	Decide upon major student needs for next year's program.
March	Choose project schools. Plan projects for the next year.
April	Continue planning for the coming year.
May	Turn in application. Choose probable students for program. Test students in current program. Gather data on success or failure of program.
June	Get state approval of next year's application. Turn in report to state on current project. Do inventory of Title I equipment and materials.

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[4]From PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS IN OREGON,
Title I, ESEA, Oregon Dept. of Ed.
942 Lancaster Drive N.E., Salem, Oregon,
Page 14

Role of the PAC*[5]

Contact and involve parents.	August
Continue making contacts.	September
Sponsor get-together for parents. Work with staff to tell parents about the program. Nominate and select PAC members.	October
Plan meetings as parents desire--possibly with health, police, and education leaders. Hold workshops.	November
Plan on-site visits. Check on progress of school's program.	December
Collect information on needs in target school(s).	January
Help develop statement to staff or board on next year's needs.	February
Give suggestions for project schools and plans.	March
Review and judge Title I application, and program budget.	April
Go over program data and year-end report (when available). Compare with program reports for other years.	May
Judge PAC performance. Begin plans early for fall program.	June

*The role of the PAC continues all year, so this timetable may vary slightly.

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[5] Ibid., page 15

The most important thing to remember in building a PAC calendar is to involve the PAC members in determining dates. You can share with them your expectations--"We need to select PAC members by the end of November, and we need to involve PAC members in the needs assessment by the end of February"--and work with them to determine interim dates for preparation.

SUMMARY

In this section we have covered many topics that together go into starting work with a PAC. We have discussed publicity and recruitment. We have presented some alternative ways to select PAC members and explored the pros and cons of each approach. We have also examined the processes and procedures that need attention if the PAC or any other group, for that matter, is to function well: meeting needs of individual members; representation; communications; decision making; problem solving; and leadership. Finally, we have included a sample timeline and calendar. We hope that this material is useful to you in starting up your PAC. We also hope that some of the material helps you with work with other groups--PTA groups, citizen advisory groups and staff groups.

Material in the next section is focused on developing some procedures that enable PAC members and other parents to visit the school, observe Title I classes and feel comfortable in the school environment.

SECTION 3 - Visiting the School & Monitoring Programs

One of the minimum Title I requirements is for PAC members to become familiar with the current program activities. One of the most effective ways for this to take place is for parents to visit the Title I programs in the school and observe how the program is being carried out.

Here are several ways that a PAC person can monitor the Title I program:

PAC Members Can:

- Visit a Title I class
- Talk to other Title I parents who are not on the PAC to tell them about the program(s) and solicit the parent's perceptions
- Talk with Title I teachers to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the current program

Reports of these activities can be considered data that can be reported to the local PAC and the district coordinator, the school principal and Title I staff, so that improvements or changes in the program can be made.

Why Aren't Parent Visits Always Effective?

Most principals say they would welcome parent involvement in monitoring; however, few parents actually come into the school to observe. The situation is understandable. From the principal's point of view the visits are time consuming, potentially disruptive or overly routine, and the outcomes of visits not clear.

From the Title I teacher's point of view parent monitoring can be a nuisance. Classroom instruction is interrupted when strangers come into the classroom, and a child will behave differently when mom or dad is in the classroom than at other times. For the teacher, too, the visits are time consuming. When the teacher asks parent opinions about Title I programs, the response is often, "I don't know. You are the expert. You know more about teaching than I do."

From a third point of view there is the Title I Parent. Frequently the parent is uncomfortable in the school. Perhaps he/she didn't do well in school, as a child. The school can be a foreign and formidable place. Offices may be difficult to find. Transportation to and from the school can pose a problem. The school can be seen as filled with "educated" people who have judged that the parent's child is failing. And educators talk funny! The following clipping from Erma Bombeck is humorous, but is also all too familiar to parents and other lay people dealing with educators.

THE SUNDAY OREGONIAN, JANUARY 15, 1978

At Wit's End: Facilitators learn best in Educationese

By ERMA BOMBECK

I stopped volunteering in my children's school when I was giving a reading and comprehension test one day to a group of 7th-graders and discovered I was reading on a 5th-grade level.

Not only that, but one of them came to me later and advised, "We were like you before our teacher participated in an in-service training program in pupil diagnosis and prescription and measured us on a set of criterion-referenced tests covering interim performance objectives."

Somehow between Spot chasing those lousy sticks all day and Show and Tell, education lost me.

I now go to parent-teacher conferences only for the bridge mix and the punch. To tell you the truth, I can barely remember when objectives weren't back to basics, classes "structured," teachers in teams and interaction didn't sound dirty.

Educators have become so proficient at speaking Educationese that I find myself having to translate for my son's teacher.

"Hello, Miss Sawyer," I said the other night, "I'm Wesley's mother."

She frowned. "The home authority figure?"

"Of course."

"Please have a seat."

"I see by Wesley's report card that he's been goofing off while you're out of the room."

She was straining to comprehend. "Translation: Rodents in the absence of their feline adversaries are prone to divert themselves."

"An excellent analogy."

"At home, we either threaten him by turning off 'Laverne and Shirley' or give 'im a rap. Translation: Motivate him through fear or eliminate an electronic visual completely."

She nodded.

"Perhaps it would be less sweat if we could work together." Miss Sawyer winced. "Or to put it another way, a combination of the facilitator and the facilitatee feeding into the learning program that is designed to enhance the concept of the learning program with a minimum of perspiration."

She smiled. "Articulation between the non-academic community and the postsecondary world is one of the classic unsolved education problems which we seem to have alleviated."

I'm not sure, but I think Miss Sawyer just said she favors birth control.

PROCEDURES FOR INVOLVING PARENTS IN SCHOOL VISITATIONS

This material is intended to describe a way in which the principal can work with the Title I PAC to design and carry out a Title I parent visitation program.

The Problem: According to state guidelines, two of the four major PAC tasks are to: (1) review the needs assessment and make recommendations about future Title I programs, and (2) review the Title I application for next year. (The other two tasks are to review the past year's Title I accomplishments and become familiar with this year's program, and to organize the PAC and tell new members about the PAC and Title I.)

As has been repeatedly pointed out, one of the biggest problems with Title I is that it is so darn hard to get people interested in serving on the PAC--at all! A Title I principal reading this material might ask, "How am I going to get a nonexistent PAC to design and carry out a Title I visitation program?" The next question is, "How can the PAC carry out the tasks of reviewing and making recommendations about the needs assessment of next year's application if they've not been involved in observing the school programs?"

So we're back to the old problem, "How to get the Title I parent involved?"

Alternatives: Various alternatives have been explored, including conducting an open house, meetings that include a lunch or dinner, inviting parents to programs that feature their children, building the skill of members to participate effectively, and so on.

These materials are about another alternative: a Title I parent visitation/observation program. We believe that such a program could greatly assist

the Title I principal in promoting an active, growing, functioning PAC. It builds and expands the knowledge of Title I parents to participate effectively in the major tasks, reviewing needs assessment and the Title I application.

Some of the materials may appear overly simple. Others may seem to deal only indirectly with the problem of program monitoring. It is our belief that in working with Title I parents, typically the educationally and economically disadvantaged, it is necessary to start with the basics. That is, you need to get the parents into the school and involved in a meaningful way.

The following materials present guidelines and suggestions for ways to develop a Parent Visitation Program. It is our notion that this can become a PAC project with guidance and assistance from the principal, but with primary responsibility falling to the PAC members. One PAC member is all you need to begin to use this material.

A caution about using the material. At several points, the parents are expected to interact with teachers. The PAC members working on this project should be aware of the advantages of working collaboratively with the teachers who will be involved in the project. Encourage both your staff and the parents to work to establish a give-and-take approach.

Developing a Parent Visitation Program

Items 1 through 8 below outline a sequence of activity for planning and carrying out a Parent Visitation Program. The column on the right identifies resources that are a part of this packet of materials. The resources are meant to be used as a starting point, modified and revised in order to fit the unique needs of PAC planning such a program.

SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITY	MATERIAL IN THIS PACKET TO ASSIST IN CARRYING OUT THE ACTIVITY
1. PAC planning meeting	1. Purposes and Value Involving Parents in Observation Visits
2. Deciding about team visits	2. Why Visit in Teams
3. Selecting a time	3. Selecting a Time for the Team Visits
4. Deciding activities for the visit	4. Activities for Parent Visits (suggestions about places, purpose and materials)
5. Planning the invitations	5. Phoning Parents (items to cover in a phone invitation, sample conversation)
6. Making the master list	6. The Master Plan
7. The parent's visit	7. Guidelines for Title I Program Observation (Principal) Suggestions for Title I Program Observers (Parents) Glossary Observation Instrument Evaluation of the Parent School Visit Sample Outline for Parent Report
8. Reporting the data	8. Using the Information

Purposes and Value of Involving Parents in Observation Visits

It is useful when planning any activity to focus on the purpose(s) of the activity. We have generated several reasons for involving parents in observation visits. We have clustered them according to reasons for parents to value this, reasons for students to benefit, reasons for the PAC to be involved and reasons why the school staff might value visits:

Parents:

1. Become familiar and comfortable in the school
2. Have the opportunity to see their children in the school environment
3. Become involved with their children's education
4. Meet Title I teachers, administrators and other staff
5. Get to know other parents of Title I students
6. Learn about the current Title I program
7. Learn some of the language of the school
8. Become better prepared to participate in reviewing needs assessment data and Title I application

Students:

1. Show off their school
2. Demonstrate reading, writing, math and other skills
3. Display their work
4. Show off their parents
5. Introduce their teachers and friends

The PAC (even a one- or two-person PAC):

1. Organizes a meaningful and worthwhile PAC activity
2. Builds ownership of the Visitation Program
3. Builds interest and support for the activities of the PAC
4. Introduces Title I parents to others
5. Collects information to use in reviewing the needs assessment and evaluating next year's application

Title I Staff (administrators, coordinators, etc.):

1. Gains active, meaningful parent involvement
2. Shares information about the school and Title I program
3. Makes parents feel comfortable and welcome in the school
4. Builds momentum for easy recruitment for next year's PAC
5. Improves school-community relations

Visiting in Teams

The goal of the Parent Visitation Program is to have every Title I parent visit the school. If at all possible, every Title I parent should be involved in the Parent Visitation Program. The chance of reaching this goal is increased if the parent visits are planned for groups of people rather than single individuals.

From a parent's point of view, the advantages of having team visits are that parents can come with their friends and build new acquaintances among other people like themselves. People talk more freely and comfortably with others they perceive to be like themselves. Visiting in a team can build the individual's sense of inclusion and belonging.

By having several people visit at the same time, you increase the chance for common needs and solutions to common problems to be identified. Transportation is easier to arrange if you plan for team visits.

From a principal's point of view, the advantages of team visits include the fact that it will take less time. Also, by increasing the number of eyes and ears in a team visit, you increase the number of points of view that get reported about the effectiveness of the Title I program. More data gives better grounds for decision making. By including a number of people in the observation, you build a spirit and momentum that can be used when setting up next year's PAC.

Finally, when people visit in a team and have an opportunity for informal communication, perception, comprehension and memory seem to increase. Besides, it's just more fun!

Consider the following criteria when identifying the teams of parents to come together to visit the school.

- Parents whose children are in the same class
- People who live in the same area and can arrange transportation together
- People who already know each other
- A mix of a few outgoing people with a few shy ones
- Mix people who are already familiar with the school with others who have seldom or never been in the school

Selecting a Time for the Team Visits

When the PAC considers the time to schedule the parent visits, they should ask themselves these questions:

1. What are the options?
   a. All parents visit in a few days
   b. Conduct the visits in one or two weeks
   c. Have a few people visit every week
   d. Visits only in the morning
   e. Visits only in the afternoon
2. What are the advantages/disadvantages of each option?
3. What is the PAC planning team's first and second choice?
4. Present the preferred time to the principal and Title I teachers whose classrooms would be visited. Negotiate a time schedule that best fits everyone's needs.

Planning a Schedule

The sample schedule on the next page can be used as a guide by you for structuring visitations. We have indicated not only the time and the place, but the purpose of the activity and resources you might consider having on hand.

TO USE WITH PAC

SAMPLE PARENT VISIT AGENDA

TIME[a]	PLACE	PURPOSE	USEFUL RESOURCES
10-20 min.	Principal or Title I coordinator's office	1. To review plans for the visit 2. To pick up materials 3. To review observer guidelines 4. Answer questions	1. Time 2. Coffee 3. Maps of the school 4. Names of teachers and other significant staff 5. Observer guidelines[b] 6. Observation instrument[b] 7. Glossary of terms
15-30 min.	Gymnasium, playground, cafetaria, library, teachers' lounge special facility classrooms	1. To become familiar with the school 2. To learn about school resources 3. To build a feeling of importance, inclusion	
20-60 min.	Title I classroom	1. To observe Title I program 2. To observe own children in school 3. To meet teachers and other students 4. To review Title I materials 5. To collect data to evaluate Title I program	1. Observation instrument[b]
15-30 min.	Principal or Title 1 coordinator's office	1. To talk about the observations made during the visit 2. To return data forms 3. To create a feeling of importance, valuing, appreciating parent involvement	1. Comfortable conversation space 2. Refreshments 3. Evaluation of parent school visit[b]

[a]Minimum parent time: 1 hour
Maximum parent time: 2 hours, 20 minutes

Minimum principal time: 1/2 hour
Maximum principal time: 1 hour

[b]Indicates a sample is included in this packet of materials

Planning the Invitations

We strongly suggest that invitations be extended by telephone or in person. Written material is often ignored because it doesn't carry the same message of interest and caring that a personal phone call does.

Here are three alternatives for conducting the phone invitations:

1. PAC planning members get a list of names and phone numbers of all Title I parents, divide up the list and place the calls.

2. PAC planning members select three or four Title I parents who would be willing to help with phoning. Ask these three or four people to be "hosts" for the Parent Visitation. The person who phones Title I parents will be at the school to greet them when they come to visit.

3. Telephone tree. If your PAC planning team is very small, have each one of them call enough people to make up one visiting team. After conducting the parent visit, ask one or two of the team members to become hosts for the next round of visits. Repeat the process until most Title I parents have visited the school.

The chart below identifies the items to cover in the phone call and gives a sample conversation to use with kids or parents who feel particularly uneasy about telephoning a stranger.

TO USE WITH PAC

PHONING PARENTS

Items to Cover	Sample Conversation
1. Identify yourself	Hello, my name is _____. I am also a parent with a child in (name of school). I'm a member of a group called the Parent Advisory Council or PAC for short. (At this point you can explain briefly what a PAC is.)
2. Reason for the call	The Parent Advisory Council and (principal) the principal, would like to invite you to come and visit (son or daughter's name)'s school.
3. Reason why your visit is important	(Student's name) is in a special (name of program) program and we would like you to be able to visit the program and let us know how you feel about it. The visit would take about (fill in time).
4. Date and time	I hope you could come to school on (day of the week) at (time) to meet me, and (the principal or coordinator), tour the school building and visit (student)'s (Title I program) class.
5. Alternative date and time, if needed	Could you make it then?
6. Transportation Parking Front entrance or place to meet	Do you need transportation?
7. Summary	O.K. then, (parent's name), I'll plan to meet you on (date and time) when you come to visit the school. I'm very happy you can come. 'Bye.

You may want to make a master plan for parent visits. Include the information listed below.

Date: Time of Visit

Host/Hostess:

Student Host or Hostess:

Names of Visiting Parents	Phone Number	Names of Children	Grade	Needs Transportation

Who is responsible for transportation?

Who is responsible for child care?

Schedule of Activities

Time	Place	Person in Charge	Has This Person Been Consulted About the Visit?

Guidelines for Title I Program Observation
(Principal)

Since some of the parents visiting the school may be there for the first time and be unfamiliar with "educationese," it would be helpful if the principal or Title I coordinator could provide visitors with a brief summary of the Title I program and some suggestions for what to look for when they visit and observe the class. A one-page handout might include:

1. Title of the class
2. Instructor's name
3. Names of assistants
4. Purpose of the class
5. Teaching strategies being used
6. Special equipment
7. Strengths of the class
8. Potential trouble spots
9. Special vocabulary
10. How this class relates to information gathered in last year's needs assessment. (Have needs assessment data available, in an understandable one-page summary form.)
11. Things to look for
12. Suggestions for a successful visit (see sample on following page)

TO USE WITH PAC

SUGGESTIONS FOR TITLE I PROGRAM OBSERVERS (PARENTS)

The following tips are intended to make your visit at the school pleasant and productive. We hope you'll feel comfortable and enjoy your visit.

1. Be friendly. School staff are glad you've taken the time to come and visit the school. They'll welcome you.
2. Ask questions. Don't be afraid to ask about people, material or activities you don't understand. We may not always know the answers to your questions, and we'll do our best to explain what we know.
3. Ask, "What do you mean?" Sometimes we use jargon and forget that others have no way of knowing what some of the words or abbreviations mean. Stop us when we slip into technical talk. Say, "Wait a minute. What do you mean?"
4. Stay on schedule. If you're expected at a certain time, be there! If you'll be late, let the people expecting you know.
5. Enjoy yourself. The school belongs, in part, to you. Enjoy your stay while you're here. We encourage smiles and good will. Have a good time and pass it along.

TO USE WITH PAC

SCHOOL VISITATION OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT

Purpose. Two purposes of this questionnaire are: (1) to get Title I parents' observations about their children's classroom and (2) to establish two-way communication between Title I parents and the school.

Use. The information will be tallied by the PAC, summarized and given to the principal, Title I coordinator and classroom teachers. It will be reported at the PAC meeting. Some of the information may be used to plan next year's needs assessment or to evaluate the Title I application.

Directions. The following statements are to help you describe the Title I classroom you visit. Mark the statement to describe what you see or feel. Read each statement carefully. If it describes what you see, draw a circle around it. If it does not describe what you see, cross it out. If you are not sure, just pass it up and go on to the next statement.

Teacher _____

Grade_____ Date_____

Room

1. The room is pleasant.
2. Student work is displayed.
3. There is a feeling of order.
4. Chairs are sized for the comfort of the student.
5. Lighting is good.
6. The temperature is comfortable.

OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT (continued)

Materials

7. There are extra books around the room.
8. There are interesting displays, such as fish tank, rock collection, pictures, etc.
9. There are enough materials for all students.

Students

10. My child seems to enjoy the activity I observe.
11. My child participates.
12. My child seems to understand directions given.
13. Rules are clear. (To me)
14. Students seem to do what they are expected to do.
15. Students seem to like this class.
16. Students work alone.
17. Students work in small groups.

Myself

18. I think I would like to be in this class.
19. I feel welcome during class visit.

Comments:

TO USE WITH PAC

EVALUATION OF THE PARENT SCHOOL VISIT

1. How do you feel about your visit today?

Very Disappointed	1	2	3	4	5	Very Pleased

2. How much did you learn from your visit?

Very Little	1	2	3	4	5	A Great Deal

3. What did you like best?

4. What, if anything, would you change?

Using the Information

The report should be kept brief and interesting. The PAC should be responsible for preparing the report with assistance available from the principal or Title I coordinator.

Once all the parent visits are completed, the PAC can use the data (information gathered from the observation sheets and parent conversations) to:

1. Compile a report
2. Publish a summary of the findings in the PAC newsletter
3. Share the idea of the project with district and state Title I offices
4. Share the summary report with the principal and Title I staff
5. Use the information as a basis for determining needs assessment, program plans and/or next year's budget
6. Keep the parents who were involved up-to-date and involved in Title I activities.

The report of the Parent Visitation Program should record the steps of the project so they can be used again next year, point out the strengths and weaknesses of the project, make suggestions for modification and change. A benefit of compiling a report is that it helps people recognize their accomplishment, and it gives closure to the project.

TO USE WITH PAC

SAMPLE OUTLINE FOR PARENT REPORT

When preparing a report, it is a good idea to use an outline to come to agreement about the content of the report. Below is a suggested outline for a parent visitation report.

OUTLINE	SAMPLE REPORT
1. Who the report is to	TO: Principal and school staff FROM: Title I PAC
2. What the report is about	RE: Title I Parent Visits
a. The purpose of the report: - to inform - to decide - to problem-solve - to make recommendations	The purpose of this report is to inform the principal and school staff about Title I visits and to present recommendations.
b. A description of the task	Description of the task: To plan and carry out a Title I Parent Visit Program as part of monitoring the school program.
c. Procedures used to carry out the task and date completed	Procedures: 1. Met with principal to plan parent visits, 2/12 2. Planned visiting schedule, 2/13 3. Presented plan to teachers: modified, accepted, 2/20-22 4. Invited parents, 2/23 5. Conducted visits, 1st and 2nd week in March 6. Collected and summarized data from Observation Instrument, 3/12 7. Presented data to PAC, 3/14 8. Made recommendations listed below, 3/15
d. The results	Results: 3 PAC planners (Martha Hill, James Smith, Hilda Jones). 25 Title I parents scheduled for visits. 22 invited by Phone: 3 unable to reach. 14 parents participated in Parent Visit. 12 completed Observation Instrument.
e. Summary of data	Data summary: (fill in from Observation Instrument)
f. Recommendations	Recommendations: 1. 2. 3. 4. (etc.)

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SUMMARY

The previous material on visiting the school was designed to give you some hands-on material to use with the PAC to make monitoring the Title I program more meaningful. The material followed a sequence similar to the problem-solving sequence.

Identifying the Problem: the need for more parents to visit the school

Searching for Alternatives: teaming for visits; a planned agenda, etc.

Planning: planning sheets for the visitation agenda

Carrying Out the Plans: this occurs when the parent visits the school

Assessing the Results: feedback forms, evaluation instruments; parent report

We hope this material will be useful to you and serve as a guideline for making school visits more useful to you, your staff and parents.

SECTION 4 - Needs Assessment

Planning and carrying out a needs assessment is the first step in most systematic problem-solving processes. To adequately assess needs it is important to include those people in the needs assessment who will benefit from any solutions that are chosen as a result of the needs assessment. For this reason we advocate having parents involved in developing and carrying out part of the Title I needs assessment.

Therefore in this section we will outline a sequence of steps of a needs assessment and present some guidelines for preparing instruments that you may want to use with the PAC.

STEPS OF A PAC NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The following eleven planning steps can be considered for preparing PAC volunteers who are interested in designing and conducting a needs assessment. You may want to review the list with the PAC chairperson.

1. PAC members decide together what they want to know. Do they have a list of a few (3-6) priority items of their own that they want to check with the community?

2. PAC members consider and decide if they want identical information from the parents and from the students or if they want somewhat different information. It helps to clarify purposes by asking how different information would be used.

3. The PAC identifies the kind of instruments required for the kind of needs assessment the group wants to do. The differences between an interview schedule and a questionnaire may require explanation.

4. The PAC decides who will build the instrument and who will receive skill training. Perhaps the entire PAC would like to attend a meeting where creating and testing questions are covered. Or perhaps a task force of two or three persons are interested. If some form of interviewing is to be done, plans should be made for as many persons as possible to practice interviewing.

5. Skill training can be provided by the principal, with the assistance of any people who know about the topics at hand--a math teacher, a counselor or a parent with related experience.

6. Sample or preliminary questions are constructed. This may be done by members or by a task force. Assemble the sample questions into a sample instrument.

7. The sample instruments are tested in a manner as nearly like the way they will be used as possible. If they are to be mailed or distributed, questions need to be tested by having a few persons attempt to write answers with no guidance. If they are to be used with an interview or in a group meeting, test them that way even though the test may involve only a small role play of the situation.

8. Information from the trial of the sample questions can be tabulated and sorted. This will give the participants some idea if the construction of the instrument really gets the information for which it was intended.

9. The data reduction procedure can be planned now.

10. The questions are revised, and the final instrument is reviewed.

11. Training in the use of the instrument is conducted. As mentioned earlier, if interviewing is to be done, many people will need to be involved to cover the community adequately. All people who will help are likely to do a better job if they receive some training. Telephone survey, recording

of information from discussion groups, and other techniques are also most successful if the people to be involved can practice what they are going to do.

In step #1 of this sequence we stated that the PAC might want to identify some target needs. The following material can be used by the PAC at a PAC meeting to conduct a mini-needs assessment to identify those target needs.

TO USE WITH PAC

HOW TO CONDUCT A MINI-NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This activity is a sample needs assessment done with any group of persons who represent a larger group. The mini-needs assessment often forms the basis for an expanded needs assessment.

Any group polling method can be used: e.g., questionnaires, interviews, speakups. The method described here, a form of speakup, results in a prioritized list of items.

Step 1 Each person writes on a small piece of paper or 3x5 card his or her primary concern about the topic at hand--schools, health services, etc. It is permissible to write two concerns if one cannot be quickly selected. (5 minutes maximum)

Step 2 People move into groups of three and share items. After a few minutes of discussion, they build combined lists of their top three items in prioritized order. (10 minutes)

Step 3 If the group is made up of 18 or more, two small groups now meet together sharing their lists, building a combined list in prioritized order, and eliminating duplications. (15 minutes maximum)

Step 4 The leader and recorder assemble the entire group. They then solicit and record the top item from the first group, then the top item, if different, from the second group, until all items are covered. The reporting group must agree that an item is a duplication before it can be eliminated. Items should be recorded where all members can see them. (15 minutes)

Step 5 Time is allowed to discuss any items for clarity of meaning (not for evaluation). (5-10 minutes)

Step 6 At this point, the leader discusses the fact that a rough prioritization exists in the list as it now stands. The group decides whether to do a more detailed prioritization.

Step 7 If the group wants to go on, each person lists the numbers of all items on a piece of paper and marks each with a score of 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 beside item numbers they feel are the top five items (5 = top item). The leader collects these papers.

Step 8 The group takes a break while two or more volunteers write down scores for each item below the item number (read all scores from one paper, move to the next paper). The leader adds scores for each item and creates a new list of the top five items, with the highest in first place.

Step 9 The new list is posted; the group reassembles and discusses it briefly.

CONSTRUCTING QUESTIONNAIRES AND INTERVIEWS

If the PAC has decided to construct its own questionnaires and interviews, the following handouts may be helpful. The first handout deals with a set of procedures for designing an instrument, either an interview or a written questionnaire. The next two handouts identify strengths and weaknesses of interviews and questionnaires and give some guidelines for development.

The fourth handout identifies some errors common to interview and questionnaire construction.

You may either distribute these handouts directly to the PAC or to the task force working on the needs assessment, or you can use them yourself as guides for a discussion with the PAC.

Two valuable resources are also available to the Title I Principal.

1. The Parent Advisory Councils in Oregon contains a chapter, "Overview of Needs Assessment," (p. 182) that has many useful procedures and instruments.
2. The Comprehensive Student Needs Assessment published by Portland Public School District #1 has a wealth of information and evaluation/needs assessment forms. To avoid duplication we have not reproduced instruments from either of these sources.

TO USE WITH PAC -- To help PAC develop questionnaire for needs assessment

CONSTRUCTING QUESTIONNAIRES AND INTERVIEWS

The first task for a group constructing a questionnaire or an interview is to decide the topics of the questions to be asked. The results of a brainstorm session can serve as the basis for generating questions. After the focus of the data is decided upon, instrument construction can begin.

To develop or improve skills in instrument construction:

- Divide the group into trios. Have each trio take one or more ideas or issues from a pre-existing list such as a brainstorm list, or have all groups work with the same broad focus.
- Distribute samples of various types of questions. The most helpful are "rating" questions, "prioritizing" questions, open-response questions, and multiple-choice questions.
- Study the samples, then individually try to write one question about each topic in each of the sample patterns.
- Share your sample questions; discuss which style seems to work best for each topic or type of information wanted.
- Jot down the insights or agreements you reach on why one kind of question is better than another for one or more kinds of topics. List pitfalls of some methods.
- Work together to construct one good question for each topic.
- In a large group, have each trio share ideas about good question formats for particular types of topics. Have a group recorder write these where they can be seen, eliminating overlaps from the groups. Share your "best" questions--write these on a blackboard or newsprint so the group can see them together.
- Discuss together how the data from the various types of questions would look. Ask yourselves if the data would be clear. Could it be interpreted? Could you make recommendations from it?
- Review the work to this point--is there a good question for each topic or type of data wanted, or is more work needed?
- Decide whether to continue to work in the large group or to turn all work done at this point over to a small task force for completion of a preliminary instrument.
- Complete a first draft instrument.
- If it is an interview and contains open-response questions, develop some neutral probes to be used when response is insufficient.

CONSTRUCTING QUESTIONNAIRES AND INTERVIEWS (continued)

- Try out the instrument in circumstances similar to its intended use. (Practice interviewing one another.)
- Manipulate the data resulting from the draft instrument. Is it manageable? Useful? Informative?
- Revise questions that are difficult to use or produce difficult or obscure data.
- Construct the final questionnaire.

TO USE WITH PAC--This can be basis of discussion on needs assessment

CONSTRUCTING INTERVIEWS

Advantages of Interviews

- Response is guaranteed.
- There is ample opportunity to clear up misunderstandings.
- The interviewer can assess the usefulness and quality of responses.
- Data are more likely to reflect the kinds of information the interviewer wishes to get.
- Verbal responses tend to be more natural than written ones.
- Interviews are useful with people who do not like to write.
- The interviewer obtains data when desired.

Disadvantages of Interviews

- The interviewer must be well prepared.
- Conducting interviews is difficult with widespread or large audiences.
- Verbatim recording may intimidate respondents.
- Getting together with people at convenient times can be a problem.
- It is easy for the interviewer and respondent to get off track.

Factors to Consider in Designing Interviews

1. Sequencing

   The question of sequencing items is more important in interviewing than in questionnaires. Experienced interviewers suggest moving from indirect to direct questions because indirect questions are less threatening. Once the respondent is at ease, more direct questions may be posed.

2. Wording of Questions

   Questions should be clearly understood by respondents. Long, complex questions and leading questions should be avoided. For example, asking "What is your attitude towards vocational education?" is preferable to "Do you prefer vocational education to the present curriculum?"

3. Types of Questions

   The construction of questions for interviews is not much different from questionnaire item construction. Both fixed-alternative and open-ended questions may be used (see "Constructing and Using Questionnaires"). Another useful tool in interviewing is the so-called "probing question" (a question that asks for clarification).

For example:

Primary Question: What is your attitude towards vocational education?

Answer: I like the idea.

PROBE: I'd like to know more about your thinking on that . . .

Other examples of probing questions would be:

What do you mean by that?

I'm not sure I understand; could you explain further?

Why?

What is the cause of that?

Do you have other reasons?

Anything else?

These questions may not be on the interview itself, but it is perfectly okay to ask them AS LONG AS THE QUESTIONER DOES NOT INFLUENCE THE ANSWERS OF THE RESPONDENT.

The interviewer should also guard against expanding upon respondents' answers in such a way that new information is provided.

4. Recording Data in an Interview

One of the most important tasks facing an interviewer is to record faithfully EVERY WORD the respondent says. It is not enough to jot down "the content" or the "main points." You would be surprised to find how much is lost whenever the interviewer changes, modifies or interprets the responses. Faithful recording is difficult and takes some practice.

If at all possible, recording should take place immediately following the response. The respondent should be asked to repeat something, if necessary. Postponing the recording nearly always results in lost information and makes the respondent lose confidence that he or she is being accurately represented.

It is helpful to provide the respondent a copy of the question being asked. This frees the questioner to write and gives the respondent more involvement. Also, respondents may return to previous questions and elaborate on their answers as new thoughts occur to them.

Sometimes, a tape recorder can be used so that the interviewer can pay full attention to the respondent and record the interview data accurately. Of course, respondents should be made fully aware that what they are saying is being recorded and every effort should be made to ensure that they are not intimidated by the presence of the tape recorder. If a respondent is uncomfortable, the recorder should not be used.

TO USE WITH PAC--This can be the basis of discussion on needs assessment methods.

CONSTRUCTING AND USING QUESTIONNAIRES

Advantages of Using Questionnaires

- You can easily contact large numbers of people spread over a wide area.
- They are less costly than person-to-person contacts over wide areas.
- Fewer persons are required to conduct a survey.

Disadvantages of Using Questionnaires

- Often, questionnaires are not returned.
- In bicultural areas, use of questionnaires requires proficiency in, and willingness to use, a common language.
- They are often impersonal. It is difficult to communicate purpose, goals and uses.
- Respondents often choose not to follow directions.
- A mailed questionnaire may be completed by someone other than the intended respondent.

How to Construct Questionnaires

The following statements are intended to be helpful to the principal who is faced with the task of helping a PAC to construct a questionnaire. Rather than being prescriptive statements, they are guiding principles which may be modified to existing conditions.

1. Appropriateness of questionnaires--decide whether a questionnaire is an appropriate way to get the information.
   a. The questionnaire should be valid--it should provide the kinds of answers you want.
   b. The questionnaire should be reliable--it should consistently provide the kinds of answers you want.
   c. The questionnaire should be representative--it should offer the respondent a chance to address all aspects of the problem.
   d. The questionnaire should be written in language that communicates with respondents simply and directly. Any technical words should be explained.
   e. The questionnaire should not request irrelevant information. Just because you have seen many questionnaires that ask "age, sex," etc., this does not mean you need this information.

CONSTRUCTING AND USING QUESTIONNAIRES (continued)

2. Things to consider in getting started:

   a. Information about respondents such as age, sex and race. If used at all, such data should be appropriate to the problem at hand. All requests, even for something as simple as the respondent's name, should be made explicit.

   b. Formulating questions

      (1) All questions should be phrased in a way that does not suggest or influence answers. Simple, factual questions should request information that is readily available to the respondent.

      (2) Types of questions are:

         (a) Open-ended questions--those in which the respondent is free to write any answer. For example: "Will you please describe your feelings about Title I math program?"

            Advantages:

            - tends to produce honest answers
            - useful in obtaining judgments or opinions
            - does not suggest answers
            - reveals reasons for respondent's feelings

            Disadvantages:

            - takes longer to tabulate than fixed-alternative questions
            - tends to reveal more emotion than fact

         (b) Fixed-alternative questions--those in which the range of response is controlled. For example:

            Do you think the math program is

            ___ good?

            ___ bad?

            ___ no opinion

            Check one of the above.

            Advantages:

            - responses are easy to classify
            - data are easy to manage
            - answers are simple and factual

Disadvantages:

- range of alternatives might be insufficient
- the question suggests the answer
- responses need careful consideration to yield desired information and this can be time consuming

(3) It may be desirable to start with broad, general questions and then proceed to more specific ones. Other kinds of sequences may be possible, but the principal should be able to help the PAC with the matter of sequencing.

3. Validating a Questionnaire--When working with a PAC on questionnaire construction, it might be a good idea for PAC members to try filling out the questionnaire to see how it works. One useful way to check out a questionnaire is to try to tabulate the data generated in a trial run. If the data are usable and easily managed, the questionnaire is probably good. If not, revisions may be called for.

4. Ethics--In conducting a questionnaire survey, you want to get as much information as you need, but you do not want to offend or violate the rights of the respondent.

   A cover letter clearly stating the purposes of the questionnaire and telling who is doing the survey, what the problem is, how important it is, and how the data will be used can serve as an effective way to guard against infringement of personal rights. This cover letter should also state that individual responses are to be held confidential. If it is possible for respondents to get the results, the cover letter should state this, as well as provide clear instructions, perhaps including a stamped addressed envelope, for return of the completed questionnaire.

5. Format

   a. Instructions should be clear and explicit

   b. Enough space should be provided for responses.

   c. Overall size should be convenient for handling and mailing.

TO USE WITH PAC—This can be used to discuss how to avoid mistakes in needs assessment plans.

Common Errors in Questionnaire Construction

1. Failing to pretest to check for unintelligible, ambiguous or objectional questions

2. Asking too many questions--thus making unreasonable demands on the respondent's time, producing more data than is usable or manageable, and causing a dropoff in the quality of later responses

3. Overlooking gross errors of format and grammar which might make an unfavorable impression

4. Selecting questions that are easily answered but do not serve the original purpose of the survey

5. Constructing questions so that biased results are obtained (leading questions, socially desirable responses, no negative response boxes, etc.)

6. Not planning the analysis until after the survey is conducted, which can create a format that makes tabulation cumbersome and slow

Common Errors in Interviewing

All of the above, plus:

1. Not writing the interview guide in enough detail

2. Insufficiently practicing needed skills of interviewing

3. Failing to establish safeguards against interviewer bias

4. Using language in the interview that is not understood

5. Asking for information the respondent cannot be expected to have or may reasonably feel is confidential

Testing the Questionnaire

We recommend testing out any questionnaires or interview forms that the PAC intends to use. We have also developed a checklist for reviewing the instrument. This handout "Questionnaire Review Criteria," can be used by the PAC and might also be of use to staff persons who are involved in questionnaire construction for needs assessment.

TO USE WITH PAC

SAMPLE

Questionnaire* Review Criteria

Purpose: A check list to help review either questionnaires or interview forms for needs assessment.

How to use with PAC: The principal working with PAC members can use this form to examine any proposed needs assessment instrument.

Directions to Reviewers

Please respond to the following questions by checking "yes" or "no" for each question. If a particular question is not appropriate for the questionnaire under consideration, write "NA" after the question rather than checking "yes" or "no."

	Yes	No	NA
A. Questionnaire Purpose and Administration			
1. Does the questionnaire have a clear			
a. purpose?	____	____	____
b. instructions?	____	____	____
2. Has PAC practiced using the questionnaire?	____	____	____
3. Are adequate procedures outlined administering the questionnaire?	____	____	____
4. If training is required, can we provide it?	____	____	____
B. Concern for Respondents			
1. Are instructions clear?	____	____	____
2. Is the amount of time required of respondents reasonable?	____	____	____

* This criteria checklist can also be used with an interview form.

Sample Criteria for Reviewing Questionnaires (continued)

	Yes	No	NA
3. Do people have the information being asked of them so they do not have to guess?	___	___	___
4. Is the questionnaire simple?	___	___	___
5. Is the format (e.g., checklist, interview schedule) appropriate?	___	___	___
6. Has adequate consideration been given to avoiding racial, sexual or cultural bias?	___	___	___
7 Are the uses to be made of the information and procedures for maintaining confidentiality adequately established and fully explained to those being questioned?	___	___	___
8. If people are to provide their names, is a space provided or if they are not to give their names, are they so informed?	___	___	___
9. Has adequate attention been given to the physical appearance of the questionnaire (e.g., format, size of print, color of paper, illustrations)?	___	___	___
C. Objectivity - (the extent to which scoring procedures are easily understood)			
1. Does a scoring key exist with its use clearly explained?	___	___	___
2. Will responses be interpreted the same way by all scorers/coders?	___	___	___
3. Will all or most respondents understand the question to mean the same thing? (Are the questions clearly and unambiguously stated?)	___	___	___

Sample Criteria for Reviewing Questionnaires (continued)

	Yes	No	NA
D. Efficiency of Data Collection, Analysis, and Record Keeping			
1. Has duplication been avoided in the data collected			
a. within this questionnaire?	___	___	___
b. between this questionnaire and other instruments used in the needs assessment?	___	___	___
2. Has the page been laid out to facilitate scoring (e.g., all responses on the right-hand side?	___	___	___
3. Is a space provided for the date of instrument completion?	___	___	___
4. Is the source of information and type of instrument identified (preferably in the title)?	___	___	___

HANDLING THE DATA

The time to plan how to use the information the PAC will collect is before you and they collect it.

Plans need to be made (see item 8, page 110) dealing with how and who will tabulate data. If you are planning to collect open-ended response data, there need to be agreements about how to categorize data. For example:

A question on a questionnaire reads:

"What do you think is the most needed improvement for Title I in this school?"

Answers may read:

"More math"

"Better math"

"Geometry courses"

The group needs to determine if these are all similar responses. Two of the answers indicate adding curriculum ("more math" and "geometry courses"), while one comment refers to increasing the quality of math courses.

The following handout gives some guidelines for planning for handling data. This handout can be used at a planning meeting with the PAC and re-examined at the time the PAC is reducing data.

TO USE WITH PAC

ANALYZING AND REDUCING DATA FROM A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Purpose: to review some simple methods for handling data that has been generated from questionnaires and interview forms.

HOW TO USE WITH PAC

This can form the basis of planning how data will be used once the interviews or questionnaires have been completed. Note: PLANS FOR REDUCING DATA NEED TO BE MADE BEFORE IT ARRIVES!

1. Tabulating data:

If you have used an interview form or a questionnaire where the person interviewed fixed-choice questions (scaled items, yes/no items, etc.), two people can tally the responses. One can read the responses and the other can keep a tally.

Example:

If you interviewed 17 people on the following item, you might get something like this:

How important is it to learn writing skills?

Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
𝍸 𝍸 |	𝍸	//	0
(11)	(4)	(2)	(0)

2. Getting the percentage:

If you have several items on your needs assessment that are scored like the above item, you might want to get the percentage of people who scored very important, somewhat important, etc.

The percentage is computed by dividing the number of people scoring an item by the total number who participated in the interview question:

Very important = 11
__divided by
17 people who responded to the item
or
65 percent

ANALYZING AND REDUCING DATA FROM A NEEDS ASSESSMENT (continued)

3. Open-response data:

When you ask questions that are not fixed (not true/false or scaled), you can get a wide range of answers. You may want to group responses by categories. For example, suppose you get the following responses to the question:

> Do you think that the school is providing a good math program for students in the fifth grade?

Answers:

1. Somewhat, but my child still has difficulty with addition
2. No, we got a better program in the school that Jimmy attended last year
3. Yes, fine
4. Sure, I can see changes every day

These could be grouped according to Favorable, Unfavorable, and Adequate:

Unfavorable	Favorable	Adequate
/	//	/

If this were the case, 2 out of 4 responses were favorable, or 50% is favorable (2 divided by 4 responses = 50%)

4. Reporting findings:

When reporting or displaying data there are several things that need to be included:

1. The focus of the needs assessment. Was this an instrument to gather general data, or specific data? Example: an overall needs assessment about student needs or a needs assessment that looks at math specifically. A good descriptive purpose statement should be included in any report of the needs assessment.
2. How was the data gathered? Inverviews or questionnaire? If a written form was used, it is good to include the form.
3. Who was interviewed or received a questionnaire? Did you interview 20 parents, 30 students, and 4 teachers? It is important to be specific when identifying the audience.

You may want to prioritize your data. This means grouping data according to what came in as the first need, the second, etc. You can prioritize by the highest score. If 80% of parents think that the school needs additional math programs, and 40% think that additional reading is important, while only 16% think that there needs to be more emphasis on physical education, you could prioritize according to needs:

1st - Math 2nd - Reading 3rd - Physical Education

REPORTING THE FINDINGS

After the data has been collected, reduced and analyzed, the PAC can have a meeting to share the results with all PAC members. The agenda for this meeting can include:

- A description of the events of the needs assessment--how it was developed and carried out; who participated
- the findings of the needs assessment
- how the PAC can participate in reporting the data

The PAC may want to work with you to prepare the final report. The following is a table of contents from a Comprehensive Student Needs Assessment[6] prepared by the Detroit School District 123J:

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

GOALS 2

PROCEDURE 3

Informing the Community 3
Selection of Respondent Groups 3
Selection of Administration Groups 4
Gathering the Information 4
Prioritizing the Information 6
Using the Information 9

PROJECTS PROGRAM/NEEDS ASSESSMENT PLAN 11

INSTRUMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT METHODS 12

[6] Parent Advisory Councils in Oregon, Title I, ESEA, Oregon Department of Education, 942 Lancaster Drive, NE, Salem, 1977, pp. 201-221.

The report prepared by the Detroit School District listed the goals of the needs assessment; described the methods used to inform the community about the needs assessment; described the methods used to identify the people to be surveyed and how the data was gathered, and prioritized; and finally the report described how the information from the needs assessment would affect the Title I program.

The Detroit report also included sample instruments and questionnaires. We feel that the PAC will have a greater ownership of the program if they also have a role in reporting the findings of the needs assessment. One way is to have a role in the preparation of the report. This role can range from identifying contents of the report to actually writing sections of the report.

SUMMARY

In this section we have outlined the steps involved in planning and conducting a needs assessment. We have also identified some things to consider when choosing to use a questionnaire or an interview format. We have not tried to include needs assessment samples as these are available in both the resource book for parents, Parent Advisory Councils in Oregon, and in the Comprehensive Student Needs Assessment produced by the Portland School District.

We have tried to organize the materials in such a way that needs assessment is seen as a task in which PAC members can participate effectively. It is our contention that if more Title I parents are involved in identifying student needs, the school will receive better information about student needs and the community will be more supportive of the solutions that are chosen by the school to meet those needs.

The final handout in this section is a needs assessment planning sheet you may want to use with the PAC.

TO USE WITH PAC

NEEDS ASSESSMENT PLANNING SHEET

Activity	Procedure (steps)	Person Responsible	Materials	Start-up Date	Due Date
Orient PAC to needs assessment					
Plan method of needs assessment					
Conduct needs assessment					
Reduce data/analyze data Display data					
Report findings					

SECTION 5 - PAC Involvement With Budgets

The Guidelines for Title I include as one of the minimum requirements: "A meeting to formally review the proposed Title I application for next year." Budgets are an integral part of any application, but to review a budget in any meaningful way requires skill. A parent with no previous budget experience cannot be expected to view a school budget with any comprehension at one meeting.

If we consider Arnstein's ladder of involvement (Section I), to review a budget with no understanding is the first level of citizen participation--manipulation! In this section we will outline a procedure whereby parents can first have actual experience in building a budget--the PAC budget--and can work with the principal to understand the overall Title I budget and its relationship to student needs and benefits. The outcome of this procedure is that parents will have greater comprehension of the task--reviewing the proposed Title I application.

BUILDING A BUDGET

Most Title I schools have some limited funds allocated for running the Parent Advisory Councils. The amount of money in this budget can range from one hundred dollars to a thousand

dollars or more, depending upon the size of the school. Most schools use this money for a variety of things ranging from duplication of Title I materials--agenda, etc.--to providing babysitting for children, which enables single parents to attend and be active in the PAC.

Since this money is allocated to the PAC for the PAC, we propose that the PAC have a major role in determining how the money will be spent. To do this will require that the PAC, working with the principal, determine priority needs and how using the money in the budget can meet these needs. The planning sheet on the next page can serve as a guideline for the principal working with the PAC to build the PAC budget.

TO USE WITH PAC

PLANNING SHEET FOR TITLE I BUDGET PREPARATION

The following procedure can be used by PAC members working with the principal to determine the way PAC monies will be budgeted.

1. Amount of money in PAC budget _____.
2. Brainstorm and list possible items that need to be covered by this budget. Examples include: cost of luncheon meetings, travel expenses, babysitting. (Remember, brainstorming is just listing--not discussing.

Possible Items to be Covered	Cost	Benefits	Priority

3. In the next column, list the cost. Example: Luncheon might be $2.00 per person times 20 people or $40.00.
4. Next, discuss each possible benefits to the PAC program. Example: babysitting might make it possible for parents who normally could not attend meetings to attend.
5. After a thorough discussion--each person has had time to say whatever he or she feels is important--prioritize the items for expense according to which is most important (#1), next important (#2), and so on. Prioritizing can help you identify which is the most important expenditure for the PAC budget.
6. If you have two priority items that take up all the PAC budget, discuss with the group if this is the best way to spend the budget. After discussion, you can call for a vote or see if there is consensus on the budget.
7. When you have an agreed-upon budget, how the money is to be spent, you will need to determine who will monitor the budget. Whoever monitors the budget will need to collect receipts for expenses and report back to the group at future meetings how much money is left in the budget.

Preparation of the PAC budget can occur early in the school year. If members are kept up-to-date on expenditures they will have ongoing direct experience with a budget and this will be helpful for their understanding of the school budget.

Reviewing the School Budget

Whereas we think that the PAC is in many ways responsible for building and monitoring the PAC budget, the principal is responsible for the school budget. Again referring to Arnstein's ladder, the PAC may be in a partnership relation to the school when dealing with the PAC budget, but because of the different level of accountability, the PAC can be seen as in an "informing-consultation" relationship with the school regarding the Title I school budget. This switch in expectations regarding the PAC role in the different budgets may need clarification. To do this the principal can at the application review meeting explain that the purpose of the meeting is to review the school Title I budget and get input and suggestions that can influence the application. In order for the PAC to have the skills to give meaningful input, you may want to consider the following activity for reviewing a budget:

TO USE WITH PAC

TITLE I: BUDGET WORKSHEET

Purpose: To familiarize PAC with budget, to build understanding and support of school.

HOW TO USE WITH PAC:

This is a mock-up for a fictitious school. You can prepare a similar budget for your PAC, using your current fiscal allocations.

- List the line items in the column on the left
- List the allocations in the second column
- Describe each line item more fully in the third column (Example: Supplies; Reading and Math = 35 textbooks, 4 slide tape sets, 4 teacher workbooks, 50 student workbooks.)
- In the final column, describe how the item directly benefits students. (Example: The money allocated for aides means that X number of aides are in the school for X number of hours. They work with the children in the following ways. They also free up the teacher to do the following tasks.)

KING SCHOOL

DETAILED ITEMS	ALLOCATION	DESCRIPTION	STUDENT BENEFITS
Instruction			
Salaries:			
Teacher, 4.5 FTE			
Aides, 5.0 FTE			
Employee Benefits			
@ 22%			
Supplies/Materials:			
Reading/Math	2,013		
Capital Outlay:			
Instructional Equipment	350		

REMEMBER TO REVIEW ALL TERMS--FTE, Capital Outlay, etc.

With an understanding of the budget and budget building procedures, the PAC will have a better understanding of the application.

However, it is also important to review with the PAC the entire application process. We have also listed a sample agenda for reviewing the Title I application. This procedure can be modified to be more congruent with individual school or district application processes.

Reviewing Program Application (continued)

- Describe the procedure that was used to identify the special educational needs--ASK FOR COMMENTS FROM PARENTS WHO WERE INVOLVED IN THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT; ASK PARENTS IF THERE ARE ANY SIGNIFICANT NEEDS THAT THEY FEEL ARE NOT BEING ADDRESSED

C. Project Participants

- Describe the method used for selecting Title I students
- Explain how this project is a supplement to the regular instruction

D. Project Goals and Performance Objectives

- Identify the major goals for students
- Explain what will be going on in the school to meet these goals

E. Instructional Activity

- Explain how students will be taught--A TITLE I TEACHER COULD BE A GUEST PRESENTER

F. Inservice

- Describe types of training or education planned for Title I personnel
- If you have aides, describe how they will be trained

3. Ask parents for any questions.

4. Ask parents what they think is especially good about the program.

5. Ask parents how they think the PAC can help with the Title I project. (Examples: help inform parents who are not present about the Title I program and how parents can help children at home.)

TO USE WITH PAC

REVIEWING PROGRAM APPLICATION

Purpose: To meet minimum Title I requirements and to build parent understanding and support of school programs.

The following guidelines may be used by the principal to explain the Title I application and application procedure:

1. Explain the application procedure (may use overheads/butcher paper):

   WHO develops the application (role of principal, staff, PAC).

   WHEN it is developed. When it is submitted. When it is approved.

   HOW information is gathered for the application (needs assessment, information about students, etc.).

   WHAT is included in report.

2. Review categories of information that will be included in the report. (The examples we have included were from last year's report and may not be exactly the same as those included in this year's report. You will need to have your own list.

   Example:

   (Name of School) Title I Program Planning Sheet

   Program Description:

   A. Community Involvement

      - Describe work of the parent advisory committee--ASK FOR PARENT INPUT
      - List composition of PAC--ASK FOR PARENT INPUT
      - Describe anticipated parent participation in project--YOU CAN BRAINSTORM WAYS THAT PAC CAN BE INVOLVED

   B. Educational Needs

      - Identify the educational needs that this project will try to meet

SUMMARY

The review of the Title I application signals the end of one school year and the beginning of the next. If PAC members feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of the year and can see that their involvement has an impact on the application for the following year, the first step for building the next year's PAC is accomplished.

We have written this guide to help the Title I principal build a PAC that has ownership of its tasks. Title I requirements outline four tasks that could conceivably be accomplished in just four meetings, but it is our impression and the impression of the principals with whom we worked that to actually build a Parent Advisory Council that works in a partnership relation with the school requires more. We have therefore developed this guide to parallel the activities of the PAC with procedures and guidelines for building PAC skill and ownership. We believe that effective citizen involvement requires commitment and time on both the part of the school and the parents, but we also believe that the pay-offs are worth the effort. We hope that this guide will help you in your work with your PAC and that some of the materials will be of use to you with other groups with whom you work.